

## Military displays varied equipment

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*American Forces Press Service*

**WASHINGTON** – Army Staff Sgt. Faith Pemberton said yesterday that seeing the U.S. Army’s Virtual Experience combat simulator gave her the “heebie-jeebies.”

“When I saw it for the first time it gave me the chills, because there are very close similarities to some real situations,” said Pemberton, who deployed to Tikrit, Iraq, in 2003.

The warfare simulator, housed beneath a 5,000-square-foot inflated dome, was one of about 200 civilian

and military exhibits set up on the National Mall here for Public Service Recognition Week, May 7 to 13. Attracting about 30,000 visitors per day, the 27th annual recognition week honors the men and women who serve America as federal, state and local government employees.

“Every day we take for granted what government does for us, whether it’s keeping our air safe and clean, to keeping our food safe to providing citizenship services, to defending our borders,” said Carl Fillichio, vice president of the Council for Excellence in Government and the event’s organizer.

“Now and then, I think it’s important to remind the general public, and remind each other what our government does,” he said. “What I really like about our military displays is it kind of adds that dimension into young people’s public consciousness so that the military could conceivably be a career for them.”

In the shadow of the U.S. Capitol, U.S. military exhibitors and defense contractors displayed security and defense equipment currently used in the field, including a Marine AH-64 Apache helicopter and LAV-25 Light-Ar-

mored Vehicle, and innovations that could aid servicemembers in future missions.

A former sailor in the Swedish navy, Nicholas Tchang, of Stockholm, visited the exhibits during his trip from New York to Los Angeles. “My feeling is that these are cool machines, and it’s interesting to walk around here and see this military equipment,” he said.

“This is a very beautiful design,” he added, looking at the Hydra 70 missiles mounted symmetrically on the Apache helicopter’s sides.

An interactive display invited

visitors to try their hand at disposing of dummy explosives using the 500-series iRobot — a durable, lightweight remote-controlled vehicle now used in Iraq in Afghanistan by explosive ordnance disposal teams in all service branches.

“With the iRobot, the individual doesn’t have to go down there and personally put his hands on (the ordnance),” said Ray Howard, a sales support specialist at iRobot who retired recently after 22 years as an Army EOD team member. “They can send a disposable robotic platform to go down, and if it gets destroyed then we’ll get them another one.” Howard said

about the \$118,000 device. “It’s better than losing a human life.”

An iRobot rolled across the lawn as 8-year-old Roman Franzia maneuvered it toward a simulated bomb. “I thought it was really fun to keep on trying to pick up the bomb and finally get it,” Roman said.

Watching his nephew successfully scoop the mock explosive with the iRobot’s metal grippers was Michael Franzia, a member of the California Wine Institute, who traveled here for Washington Wine Week. “Roman’s father was in the Army Reserve, and I think he wants to carry on the heritage,” Franzia said.



*Photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Molly Burgess*

Young visitors interact with an iRobot while Ray Howard, (far right) operates the device using a remote control similar to that of a video game joystick during National Public Service Recognition Week, May 10, 2007, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.



Army Spc. Christopher McComb, (right) rigs a parachute on an exhibit participant in a Public Service Recognition Week display on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., on May 10, 2007.



Derek Metcalf, a participant in the U.S. Marine Corps National Public Service Recognition Week exhibit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., simulates firing a machine gun with his grandson May 10, 2007.



Participants take an interactive tour inside the Virtual Army Experience exhibit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., May 10, 2007, as part of National Public Service Recognition Week.



Marine Sgt. Mathew Litton, right, watches as a participant in the National Public Service Recognition Week exhibit on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., looks into the Command Launch Unit attached to an anti-tank missile launcher on May 10, 2007.